

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH



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Memorial Day Safety Tips

With Memorial Day approaching the San Bernardino County, Department of Public Health, Division of Environmental Services offers recommendations for safe food preparation practices for this holiday weekend and throughout the summer. Memorial Day weekend marks the kickoff of summer fun for Californians, including the traditional barbeques and picnics. By following simple safety measures when preparing food, both indoors and outdoors, Californians will significantly reduce the possibility of consuming harmful bacteria that can cause foodborne illnesses.

There are many different types and causes of foodborne illness; symptoms may include fever, nausea, and diarrhea. While usually mild, symptoms can occasionally be severe and even life threatening. Infants, the elderly, and persons with compromised immune systems may be more susceptible to the effects of foodborne illnesses. The following are tips on preparing food safely to avoid the effects of foodborne illnesses:

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- **Thaw Safely-** Completely thaw meat and poultry before grilling so it cooks more evenly. Use the refrigerator for slow safe thawing. You can microwave defrost if the food will be placed immediately on the grill.
- **Marinating-** Marinate food in the refrigerator not on the counter. Poultry and cubed meat or stew meat can be marinated up to 2 days.
- **Transporting-**When carrying food to another location, keep it cold to minimize bacterial growth. Use an insulated cooler with sufficient ice or ice packs to keep the food at 41° F or below. Pack food from the refrigerator into the cooler just before leaving home.
- **Keep Cold Food Cold-**Keep meat and poultry refrigerated until ready to use. Only take out meat and poultry that will immediately be placed on the grill. When using a cooler, keep it directly out of the sun by placing it in the shade. Avoid opening the lid too often, which lets cold air out and warm air in. Pack beverages in one cooler and perishables in another.
- **Precooking-**Precooking food partially in the microwave, oven, or stove is a good way of reducing grilling time. Just make sure that the food goes immediately on the preheated grill to complete cooking.
- **Cook thoroughly-**Cook food to a safe minimum internal temperature to destroy harmful bacteria. Meat and poultry cooked on a grill often browns very fast on the outside. Use a food thermometer to be sure the food has reached a safe minimum internal temperature. Beef, veal, and lamb steaks, roasts, and chops should be cooked to minimum internal temperature of 145°F for 15 seconds. All cuts of pork should reach a minimum internal temperature of 145°F for 15 seconds. Hamburgers made of ground beef should reach a minimum internal temperature of 158°F. All poultry should reach a minimum internal temperature of 165°F for 15 seconds.
- **Reheating-**When reheating fully cooked meats like hotdogs, grill to a minimum internal temperature of 165° for 15 seconds.

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- **Keep Hot Food Hot-** After cooking meat and poultry on the grill, keep it hot until served at a minimum internal temperature of 135°F or warmer.
- **Serving the Food-**When taking food off the grill, use a clean platter. Don't put cooked food on the same platter that held raw meat or poultry. Any harmful bacteria present in the raw meat juices left on counters, platters, or utensils could contaminate safely cooked food. In hot weather (above 90° F), food should never sit out for more than one hour.
- **Leftovers-**Refrigerate any leftovers promptly in shallow containers. Discard any food left out more than 2 hours (1 hour if temperatures are above 90°F).

For more information on safe food handling practices, contact the San Bernardino County, Department of Public Health, Environmental Health Services Division at (909) 884-0456 or visit our website at www.sbcounty.gov/dehs.